

TWO LETTERS

I

TO -- -- -- LONDON, ENGLAND

Camden, N.J., U.S. America, March 17th, 1876. DEAR FRIEND:--Yours of the 28th Feb. receiv'd, and indeed welcom'd. I am jogging along still about the same in physical condition--still certainly no worse, and I sometimes lately suspect rather better, or at any rate more adjusted to the situation. Even begin to think of making some move, some change of base, &c.: the doctors have been advising it for over two years, but I haven't felt to do it yet. My paralysis does not lift--I cannot walk any distance--I still have this baffling, obstinate, apparently chronic affection of the stomachic apparatus and liver: yet I get out of doors a little every day--write and read in moderation--appetite sufficiently good--(eat only very plain food, but always did that)--digestion tolerable--spirits unflagging. I have told you most of this before, but suppose you might like to know it all again, up to date. Of course, and pretty darkly coloring the whole, are bad spells, prostrations, some pretty grave ones, intervals--and I have resign'd myself to the certainty of permanent incapacitation from solid work: but things may continue at least in this half-and-half way for months, even years.

My books are out, the new edition; a set of which, immediately on receiving your letter of 28th, I have sent you, (by mail, March 15,) and I suppose you have before this receiv'd them. My dear friend, your offers of help, and those of my other British friends, I think I fully appreciate, in the right spirit, welcome and acceptive--leaving the matter altogether in your and their hands, and to your and their convenience, discretion, leisure, and nicety. Though poor now, even to penury, I have not so far been deprived of any physical thing I need or wish whatever, and I feel confident I shall not in the future. During my employment of seven years or more in Washington after the war (1865-'72) I regularly saved part of my wages: and, though the sum has now become about exhausted by my expenses of the last three years, there are already beginning at present welcome dribbles hitherward from the sales of my new edition, which I just job and sell, myself, (all through this illness, my book-agents for three years in New York successively, badly cheated me,) and shall continue to dispose of the books myself. And that is the way I should prefer to glean my support. In that way I cheerfully accept all the aid my friends find it convenient to proffer.

To repeat a little, and without undertaking details, understand, dear friend, for yourself and all, that I heartily and most affectionately thank my British friends, and that I accept their sympathetic generosity in the same spirit in which I believe (nay, know) it is offer'd--that though poor I am not in want--that I maintain good heart and cheer; and that by far the most satisfaction to me (and I think

it can be done, and believe it will be) will be to live, as long as possible, on the sales, by myself, of my own works, and perhaps, if practicable, by further writings for the press.

W. W.

I am prohibited from writing too much, and I must make this candid statement of the situation serve for all my dear friends over there.

II

TO -- -- -- DRESDEN, SAXONY

Camden, New Jersey, U.S.A., Dec. 20, '81. DEAR SIR:--Your letter asking definite endorsement to your translation of my "Leaves of Grass" into Russian is just received, and I hasten to answer it. Most warmly and willingly I consent to the translation, and waft a prayerful God speed to the enterprise.

You Russians and we Americans! Our countries so distant, so unlike at first glance--such a difference in social and political conditions, and our respective methods of moral and practical development the last hundred years;--and yet in certain features, and vastest ones, so resembling each other. The variety of stock-elements and tongues, to

be resolutely fused in a common identity and union at all hazards--the idea, perennial through the ages, that they both have their historic and divine mission--the fervent element of manly friendship throughout the whole people, surpass'd by no other races--the grand expanse of territorial limits and boundaries--the uniform'd and nebulous state of many things, not yet permanently settled, but agreed on all hands to be the preparations of an infinitely greater future--the fact that both Peoples have their independent and leading positions to hold, keep, and if necessary, fight for, against the rest of the world--the deathless aspirations at the inmost centre of each great community, so vehement, so mysterious, so abyssmic--are certainly features you Russians and we Americans possess in common. As my dearest dream is for an internationality of poems and poets binding the lands of the earth closer than all treaties and diplomacy--as the purpose beneath the rest in my book is such hearty comradeship, for individuals to begin with, and for all the nations of the earth as a result--how happy I should be to get the hearing and emotional contact of the great Russian peoples.

To whom, now and here, (addressing you for Russia and Russians and empowering you, should you see fit, to print the present letter, in your book, as a preface,) I waft affectionate salutation from these shores, in America's name.

W. W.